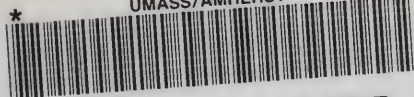


MASS. EA34.2: P92

# *PRESERVING THE LAND*

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*A program of stewardship  
for Massachusetts  
through acquisition, management  
and protection of our  
natural areas*

Commonwealth of Massachusetts



**Department of  
Fisheries, Wildlife &  
Environmental Law Enforcement**

Walter E. Bickford, *Commissioner*

An Agency of the Executive Office of Environmental Affairs



# LAND STEWARDSHIP

*Preserving the values of the Commonwealth's natural places for all time and for the benefit and enjoyment of our people*



## MAN HAS INTERACTED WITH NATURE

in Massachusetts for centuries, but has negatively impacted the environment, particularly over the last 350 years. Though we now have extensive forested areas and abundant wildlife, it was not so long ago that man's historical uses of the land, particularly agricultural, threatened the continued viability of wildlife and man's related recreational uses of wild areas and ecosystems. The "industrial revolution" brought increasing pollution of our streams and other water bodies from manufacturing wastes. Inland fisheries and wildlife both suffered as a result.

Today, most of our agricultural lands have reverted to forest land, with an estimated 75% of the Commonwealth wooded. State and federal programs and local grassroots efforts are beginning to make an impact on cleaning up our natural waterways. Conservation efforts based on a commonly held system of environmental values means large areas of undeveloped land are being set aside in posterity for watershed protection, fisheries and wildlife conservation, and recreational enjoyment. But with continued commercial and residential development, the need to secure natural areas has never been more urgent.



# Natural Corridors / RIVERS & LAND

*"A statewide system of great Natural Corridors will not only go far toward assuring the preservation of our rich natural resources, but will also afford opportunities for individual and personal contact with our remaining wild areas. The experience of these untrammelled places is psychologically necessary for Americans of every stripe. It is our great natural inheritance."*

Walter E. Bickford, *Commissioner*  
Massachusetts Department of Fisheries, Wildlife &  
Environmental Law Enforcement

## Massachusetts Hunters and Fishermen Show the Way

Since 1968, Massachusetts' hunters and freshwater fishermen have seen one dollar of their hunting and fishing license applied toward the purchase of wildlife lands and habitat. In this way, Massachusetts has brought some of our prime natural areas into the public domain—safe always from unwarranted development and available for the benefit and enjoyment of Massachusetts' residents and visitors.

By 1980, using funds so generated, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife owned land totaling 43,859 acres of wildlife habitat purchased or donated. These holdings include over 40 wildlife management areas and 13 wildlife sanctuaries from the Cape to the Berkshires.

Unfortunately, these monies generated by sportsmen to preserve our natural areas have not proved sufficient to the need. As part of an open space bond issue (Chapter 723, Acts of 1983), the Massachusetts legislature has made available new monies to be spent over 10 years for land acquisition under the categories of Major Rivers, Rare and Endangered Species, Public Access, Inholdings Enlargement, and Cold Water Streams.

By late 1986, the Division of Fisheries and Wildlife had increased wildlife habitat holdings to 49,878 acres. But already, a reassessment of actual funding need in the face of economic and marketplace changes put an ominous face on what could be accomplished.

The state's "boom economy" in the 1980's has, to a considerable extent, already reduced the practical effect of Chapter 723 as land values have skyrocketed with development pressures. Once again "open space" is in trouble as private sector developers competing for land with significant natural and wildlife values have not only bought up choice parcels, but also escalated the going price for land in general. Increasingly, appropriated state funds are being eroded in the land acquisition marketplace.



The continuing growth of the population and development of the economy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts is having an irreversible impact on the natural world. It is therefore necessary and desirable that areas representative of the significant habitats and ecosystems of the Commonwealth be set aside and preserved for the benefit of present and future generations, for once destroyed, they cannot be wholly restored. Natural lands and waters together with the plant and animal life living thereon in natural communities are a part of the heritage of the people.

It is therefore the public policy of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts to secure for the people of present and future generations the benefits of an enduring resource of natural areas including the elements of natural diversity present in the Commonwealth by establishing a state network of protected areas representing the ecosystems of the Commonwealth, a system of nature preserves, protecting them, providing for appropriate use that will not damage them, gathering and disseminating information about them and otherwise encouraging and assisting in their preservation for the common benefit of present and future generations.

## Interconnecting Corridors and Ecosystem Protection

The key to effective land and wildlife conservation as it is applied to our natural areas lies in the concept of wholistic ecosystem protection.

The Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement (DFWELE) is an environmental protection agency of the Commonwealth, which has as an integral, ongoing function the location and purchase of significant fisheries, and wild floral and faunal habitats across the state. The department maintains a separate program to seek and acquire habitat critical to the Commonwealth's rare and endangered plant and animal species.

By linking existing state, federal, local and non-profit private open spaces together, the department through its land acquisition planning and decisions is working to form linear greenway corridors as the best assurance for natural and wildlife area preservation.

Likewise, as an agency providing public access and recreational opportunities for the state's residents, the department is actively acquiring open space suitable for a quality outdoor experience. This is being done in the face of the realities of an "urbanizing environment" where development tends to outpace and overcome efforts to retain adequate open space for outdoor recreation.



## Rivers and Streams—Massachusetts' Lifeline Corridors

Massachusetts rivers and stream systems are the great natural arteries or circulatory system for our natural areas and wildlife. Unfortunately, they have been polluted and abused for centuries as a result of commercial and industrial activity, residential sewer wastes, locks and dams, poor or incompatible lake management practices, and abusive recreational uses.

River, stream and wetland corridors provide the richest repositories of diverse fisheries, wildlife and flora. They are also of significance to water supply, public health, varied recreational opportunities, and the so-called "quality of life." Protecting these "greenway or riverway" corridors against incompatible development uses is a key objective of the department's land acquisition program.

Fish and wildlife cannot exist within limited habitat confines. Linear corridors are essential to wildlife protection and management. Likewise, the recreational benefits of linear riparian greenways to canoeing, hiking, fishing, birding, horse trails, cross country skiing, and similar passive outdoor recreational uses are obvious. Greenway corridor formation for environmental protection and recreation has long been public policy in European countries, Australia, New Zealand, Canada and China. Corridor systems in the U.S. necessarily involve interstate coordination—a growing and increasingly effective practice. Riparian corridors represent the single most significant ecosystems affecting the work and mission of the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement.

## DFWELE's Role in River Frontage Ecosystem Protection

The department has developed an administrative infrastructure and an outreach network to protect the Commonwealth's riparian systems. In 1984 legislative action placed the state's Greenway program in the department. Funds are thus provided for grants and technical guidance to non-profit watershed associations for river and streams and related land use planning. As a result the department has developed a strong working relationship with all existing watershed protection groups. They are an integral part of the department's grassroots network to acquire riparian habitat.

## Adopt-A-Stream Program

More significantly, the department has just launched a major statewide citizen's mobilization effort to protect riverway corridors and preserve riparian lands. Meeting the threat of pollution and undue development with their consequent disruption of natural ecosystems, local residents, civic groups, sportsmen's organizations, and staff from the Department of Fisheries, Wildlife and Environmental Law Enforcement, work closely together on public information, data gathering, environmental monitoring, and advocacy for the river or stream.

Fisheries and Wildlife makes available professional services to the local Adopt-A-Stream organization, including biological analysis, legal advice, media support, and financial assistance.

In time, with the success of cooperative efforts such as Adopt-A-Stream, rivers in the Commonwealth can again become havens for fish and wildlife, and places where residents can be assured of quiet refuge and natural beauty.





*"It would seem as if this system of connecting forests might come to be applied on a national scale (after European models) . . . largely a matter of linking up from state to state. Someday we are going to improve our navigable inland waters and link them up so as to make a system . . . dovetailing intimately with a system of mountain chains skirting the edges of various watersheds.*

*Here would be the basis of a land-and-water . . . network which could connect and unify a national recreation ground which would reach from ocean to ocean.*

*The rivers should in time be made into scenic highways, their banks protected and improved as well as their waters regulated."*

Benton MacKaye  
Founder, Appalachian Trail  
October 1916



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